

Columbia University  
Graduate School of Arts & Sciences  
Human Rights Studies Master of Arts

A HISTORY OF ACTIVISM OF THE GUAMANIAN WOMEN'S SOCIAL  
MOVEMENT: FROM THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN IN  
BEIJING 1995 TO PRESENT

A final paper by

BREANNA G. LAI

Thesis Adviser: Dr. J. Paul Martin

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of  
Master of Arts

January 2016

## Acknowledgements

This MA thesis project would not have been realized without the contributions of so many passionate souls that generously conversed with me throughout my research and writing process. Firstly I would like to express my appreciation to my thesis advisor Dr. J. Paul Martin whom has helped me shape my thesis topic from its very conception. I would also like to extend my sincere gratitude to everyone that I interviewed, both in person and over the phone. Anita Arriola, Dr. Ellen Bez, Dr. Michael Lujan Bevacqua, Congresswoman Madeleine Z. Bordallo, Lourdes Leon Guerrero, Speaker Judith T. Won Pat, and Laura Marie Torres Souder, it was an honor collecting your valuable wisdom and lifetime of experiences advocating for the Guamanian women's movement. I would also like to acknowledge the brilliant women from the Guam Coalition Against Sexual Assault and Family Violence who willingly shared their time and research data with me, Cynthia Cabot Executive Director and Jenna Sanchez, Project Coordinator thank you. *Si Yu'os Ma'åse* to Francine Naputi for sharing her policy analysis paper that she submitted for fulfillment of her Masters in Public Health Degree at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, titled *I Hafa Ti Ta Sasangan, Siña Ha' Ha Goggue Hit: A Comparison of Sexual Education Policies in Guåhan and Hawai'i*. Last but not least I would like to personally dedicate my project to my family, friends, and loved ones for a lifetime of love, support, and open-mindedness. All of you and our island have informed my personal ontology and I carry you close to my *kurason* (Chamorro for heart). This ontology has motivated me to shed more light on the past quarter century's activism and lack there of, regarding the efforts of women on the island territory of Guåhan working towards manifesting true gender equality for all Guamanians.

## **Plagiarism Declaration**

1. I have used the American Psychological Association (APA) as the convention for citation and referencing. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this paper from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, cited and referenced.
2. I have not allowed, and will not allow, anyone to copy my work with the intention of passing it off as his or her own work.
3. I acknowledge that copying someone else's assignment or essay, or part of it, is wrong, and declare that this is my own work.
4. All individuals interviewed have provided formal written consent for their words to be quoted, paraphrased, and cited.
5. All mistakes are my responsibility.

Signature:  
Breanna Gah-Fung Lai

Date:  
January 11, 2016

# Table of Contents

I.	Abstract	
II.	Introduction	p. 5
III.	The Prominent Role of Women in Ancient Chamorro Society	p. 8
IV.	The Arrival of the West	p. 10
V.	Americanization of <i>Guåhan</i>	p.13
VI.	The United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing 1995	p.14
VII.	The Secretariat of the Pacific Community & Pacific Platform for Action	p.16
VIII.	The Necessity of Healing Hearts Rape Crisis Center	p. 21
IX.	High Rate of Teen Births & Lack of Standardized Sexual Education in the Public School System	p. 32
X.	Feminism a White Woman's World	p. 40
XI.	Guam's Divisive Abortion Debate of 1990	p. 45
XII.	Reluctant Guamanian Women Leaders in the Public Sphere	p. 55
XIII.	Guamanian Women Working in NGOs	p. 58
XIV.	Conclusion	p. 59
XV.	References	p. 63

## **I. Abstract**

While the priorities of the key advocates of women's rights issues on the unincorporated U.S. territory of Guam have remained largely the same over the past quarter century the gusto of the Guamanian women's rights movement has dissipated, dangerously finding itself amidst risk of extinction. This harmfully implicates Guamanian girls and women as human rights violations in the form of gender discrimination remain substantial limiting not only their wage earnings but also their access to reproductive health and sexual education, subjecting them to a high rate of teen pregnancy, sexual assault, rape, and family violence.

The early 1990s in Guam was an active time for the Guamanian women's rights movement as key actors were organizing in preparation for the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. In 1990 a contentious debate, concerning women's reproductive health, erupted on island when the governor signed Anti-Abortion Bill 848 into law, sparking activism like never before on an island with a nearly 90 percent Roman Catholic population dividing many Guamanians, especially its women into opposing camps. This energizing incitement of activism of the Guamanian women's rights movement surrounding a particular human rights violation has since been lost; replaced with a plethora of women's social organizations that abstain from engaging with current human rights violations consequentially creating a detrimental illusion of gender equality on the island when in reality local statistics and testimonies prove women remain inferior.

Many key feminist actors feel this is due to a combination of occurrences including the island's economic prosperity in the 1990s, resident's Catholic faith combined with a *machismo* dominated cultural attitude, the divisive nature of women's issues, and Guamanian women leaders who are bound by their traditional cultural principle of respecting their elders.

The truth is, the women who have broken through Guam's bamboo ceiling only represent a finite fraction of the female population of the island whom are highly educated and/or socially and politically well positioned. The majority of Guamanian women have intersectional identities, influenced by a history of both Spanish colonization and Americanization that has stripped women of their ancient matrilineal social power. These women continue to invisibly suffer in silence as their mothers, and grandmothers did before them; enduring frequent incidences of sexual and family violence, limited access to reproductive health and sexual education, and unequal wages in comparison to their male counterparts.

## **Keywords**

*Women, Activism, Feminism, Chamorro, Guåhan (Guam), Gender Equality, Economic Wage Equality, Women's Rights, Reproductive Rights, Right to Life, Right to Choose, Abortion, Sexual Education, Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence, Teenage Pregnancy, Catholic Church, Intersectionality, "Othering"*

*“Today in the United States and the developed world, women are better off than ever. We stand on the shoulders of the women who came before us, women who had to fight for the rights that we now take for granted.” ~Sheryl Sandberg*

## **II. Introduction**

Guam, the largest, most southern island in the Micronesian Islands chain, in the Western Pacific Ocean, is home to the indigenous inhabitants the Chamorros and a mix of other migrant groups dominated by neighboring West Pacific Islands and the countries of South East Asia. Guam is an unincorporated territory of the United States and has been listed as one of the Non-Self Governing Territories by the Special Committee on Decolonization of the United Nations since 1946 (Non-Self Governing Territories, 2010). According to Guam’s Bureau of Statistics and Plans in 2013, the island’s total population was 172,630 (Guam’s Facts & Figures, 2014). In the 2010 Census it was estimated that the largest ethnic group on Guam is the native Chamorros at about 37 percent, with the next largest ethnicity group being Filipinos at about 26 percent (Guam Population 2013, 2013). Chamorro people as a group have undergone multiple changes in their political status that Chamorro historian Laura Marie Torres Souder divides into five historical periods. 1500 B.C. to A.D. 1521 is the Pre-contact and Ancient Chamorro period. 1521 to 1898 saw Chamorro’s first contact with the West, the Spanish period. The Spanish period was followed by 1898 to 1941 and 1944 to 1950, which was the Naval Administration or First American period. 1941 to 1944 was the Japanese occupation or World War II period as a result of the attack on Pearl Harbor. 1950 to present day is the Post World War II or Second American period of Guam (Souder, 1992, p. 7).

With the arrival of the Spanish in the seventeenth century came the introduction of the Chamorro people to the Roman Catholic faith, which according to Souder was, “...the first known turning point in the position of Chamorro women” (Souder, 1992,

p.8). The Roman Catholic Church continues to be the largest religious affiliation on the island of Guam and in 2013 it was estimated that about 85 percent of the island community is practicing Roman Catholics (Guam Population 2013, 2013). The position of women in the Roman Catholic community stands in stark juxtaposition to the customs and gender roles of the ancient Chamorro matrilineal society, pre-Spanish colonization. Souder identifies the second turning point for the position of Chamorro women to be the early twentieth century with the arrival of the American Naval Administration's rule that quickly enacted laws that restricted Chamorro women's rights and activities. Before the rule of the Americans, the Chamorro economy consisted of men and women working together to subsistence fish and farm. The Naval Administration replaced Guam's economy with a cash-based market economy that inevitably shifted the Chamorro division of labor; thus creating a clear segregation between the workplace and the home that never existed before, assigning men to the wage-earning role and women more and more to the domestic sphere (Souder, 1992).

Guam's situation is unique as its current administering power is the United States of America (Guam Listing as a Non-Self Governing, 2015). According to Speaker Judith T. Won Pat of Guam's 33<sup>rd</sup> Legislature, the island has not passed a law to participate in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which the United Nations General Assembly adopted in 1979. "As an unincorporated territory of the United States, we follow U.S. gender equality laws," stated Speaker Won Pat in an interview. "So although we may create our own laws locally – we are represented by the United States within the United Nations General Assembly as well as in regards to international treaties, as one such as CEDAW" (Won

Pat, personal communication, Sept. 4, 2015). On July 17, 1980 the United States of America became a signatory to CEDAW, but has yet to ratify the treaty, making it the only participating country to exempt itself from full ratification to what is often referred to as the international bill of rights for women (United Nations Treaty, Jan. 10, 2016). The island of Guam and its people find that they often inhibited and bound by their administering power, the United States, in many adverse ways. While the people of Guam are born U.S. citizens they are in a subservient political condition if they remain on Guam, as they are unable to vote for president. Certain members of Congress can overturn any law passed in Guam and can decide which parts of the U.S. Constitution apply to it. In 1950 the U.S. Congress passed the Organic Act that provided a measure of limited local civilian self-government that continues today, with an elected governorship, an elected legislature of fifteen senators, a hierarchical judicial system, and one non-voting delegate to Congress. In 1965 the island elected the first non-voting delegate to the United States Congress and in 1970 the first gubernatorial election was held (Souder, 1992, p. 34). The ultimate fate of Guam remains to be determined, as unincorporated territories, unlike incorporated territories, are not destined for statehood (Underwood, 2014).

With the exception of the early 1990's, the Guamanian women's rights movement has lost its steam and had a tough time defining feminism on island for a multitude of reasons primarily being a changing Chamorro culture subjected to a history of Spanish colonialism, Japanese occupation, Americanization, and the Roman Catholic church's influence. Now, over two decades later feminism on Guam has stalled finding itself amidst a crisis. The island's female community, despite the fact that there are local



women in high-ranking leadership positions, is suffering because of limited access to sexual education and reproductive health, frequent incidences of sexual assault, rape, and family violence, and unequal wages in comparison to their male counterparts. So why are Guamanian women, particularly those who hold high-ranking leadership positions, hesitant to confront these human rights violations and shatter the illusion of gender equality on Guam? Many key feminist actors feel this is due to a combination of occurrences including the island's economic prosperity in the 1990s, resident's Catholic faith combined with a *machismo* dominated cultural attitude, the divisive nature of women's issues, and Guamanian women leaders who are bound by their traditional cultural principle of respecting their elders.

### **III. The Prominent Role of Women in Ancient Chamorro Society**

The roles of ancient Chamorro women were dominant and manifold in island life. "The women rule here! This is the message found in the early accounts of life in the islands now called the Marianas. Women formulated decisions and exercised authority in domestic matters and far beyond" (McGrath, 1988, p.xv). Even the ancient Chamorro creation legend begins with a woman. It was a woman that gave birth to the sea, the sky, the earth and all living things. Larry A. Lawcock wrote, "This belief of the ancient Chamorros may explain the high position women held in their society" (Lawcock, 1977, p.7). Matrilineal clans organized the ancient Chamorros, meaning the female line determined lineage and descent. Children were given the surnames of their mothers, not their fathers. All matters relating to property, inheritance, and family life were heavily influenced by ancient Chamorro women. According to Lawcock in 1700 French Jesuit historian of the Mariana Islands, Pere Charles Le Gobien, wrote war and navigation were

the only things Chamorro women did not control. Additionally, Louis de Freycient, a French count in the second decade of the eighteenth century stated that, "...women played an important role in commerce and wielded so much influence in governing councils that they effectively directed public affairs...every question of family honor and peace and war was submitted to a council which was composed of the male chiefs and the women" (Lawcock, 1977, p.7). Marriage in ancient Chamorro times did not take her away from her family. A Chamorro woman would always belong to the clan she was born into and if widowed she would return home with her children and property (Thompson, 1977, p.4). Souder explained when ancient Chamorro marriages dissolved the man had more to lose than the woman as he would acquire none of their kin or property. Ancient Chamorro women who suspected their husbands of adultery could "punish them in many ways. Her parents go to the husband's home and carry away everything of value, not even leaving him a spear, or mat... If a woman is untrue to her husband, the husband may kill the lover but the woman receives no punishment" (Souder, 1977, p.4). The economic life of ancient Chamorro's livelihood depended on contribution from both genders as they often shared roles. Chamorro women were in a prominent role as in addition to household and child care, they also were the gatherers of the food on the reef and in the jungle, fishers on the seashore with hand nets, the makers of coconut oil and earthen pots used for cooking, weavers of sails, mats, bags, boxes, and *Suruhanas* (herb curers) for native healing medicines. Ancient Chamorro men tended to the gardening, deep-sea fishing, canoe sailing, and house and canoe construction. A bulk of the men's time was spent in warfare, games, and ceremonials. Father Diego Luis de San Vitores, the founder of the first Catholic Church on Guam observed the role of Chamorro

women in the family, “In the family the head is the father or elder relative but with limited influence. In the home it is the woman who rules and her husband does not dare give an order contrary to her wishes nor punish the children, for she will turn upon him and beat him” (San Vitores, 1977, p.5). Lawcock provided further cultural examples of the esteem that women held. Annually, it was expected of fishermen to give their first catch to their female relatives. Chamorro women could also request from any of their male relatives any property that she needed, such as a canoe, and he would willingly oblige in exchange for a string of shells. Chamorro wedding traditions also exemplified the status of women as mothers and grandmother negotiated the engagement. Furthermore the mothers of the bride and groom presented the wedding cake to the husband’s eldest sisters. The eldest woman in the family then had the sole power to divvy up the cake. Women were also awarded special treatment when it came to quarrels as the whole clan took her side, in contrast a man in quarrel was left to fend for himself (Lawcock, 1977, p.7). Therefore, the ancient Chamorro women of Guam did not hold formal and official power, but they most certainly harnessed a much more informal and unofficial power. With the arrival of the Spanish came the introduction to the Catholic faith, dramatically changing ancient Chamorro traditions.

#### **IV. The Arrival of the West**

In March of 1521 Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan landed on the shores of Guam’s southern Umatac Bay. A century post-contact, during the latter seventeenth century, brought about the establishment of the first Christian mission on Guam imposing ideology, ethics, and a social system completely foreign to Chamorros, forever changing the deep roots of ancient Chamorros. Women then took on the roles of culture bearers, as

it was their task to preserve the culture. Women did this through their role as “*techa*,” teachers of the children, teaching the language and customs of their ancestors along with Christianity, these roles persist for Chamorro women into present day. In 1977 Souder wrote of the essentialism of the Chamorro woman’s identity, “Instinctively the Chamorro woman knew that her survival and the survival of the Chamorro culture was one and the same” (Souder, 1977, p.14). What then motivated Chamorros to willingly participate in Christianity, an ideology that was so alien to them? Dr. Michael Bevacqua, instructor in Chamorro Studies at the University of Guam recalled a passage from a priest that he has read that gave a sense of what it was like for Chamorros during the early days of conversion to Christianity. A priest reported that Chamorro men were coming to convert and the reason that they were coming to convert was because the Catholic Chamorro families who already converted would act completely different, the women obeyed everything the husband said, and never questioned them. When the priest explicitly asked the Chamorro men what were their motivations to convert the men said that their neighbor used to have a wife that would control him, tell him what to do, she would beat him, fool around on him, now she does everything he says, and I want my wife to be like that too. “At the time of the Spanish colonization women were more resistant than Chamorro men were as we might imagine because it didn’t offer as much to Chamorro women as it did to Chamorro men” Bevacqua, personal communication, Oct. 1, 2015). According to Bevacqua, some Chamorro men converted because it basically meant that they could control the house, control their families. They would no longer have to rely on the council of the women anymore, as would they not have to share power anymore. “The Spanish definitely offered the men a lot more power in every space of life”

(Bevacqua, personal communication, Oct. 1, 2015). Bevacqua found that Guam's current patriarchy is infused with that "good old Catholicism," along with a lot of other religions that attach the woman to the husband, essentially telling her to do whatever the husband wants and that's her sole role in life that God has created for her. Once God is invoked there is no question that his followers become resistant to contesting his message.

Chamorro women of the eighteenth century belonged to a female generation that experienced the most drastic transition, their social lives now orbited around church activities, and their pre-colonization authority and independence was severely limited. "Along with the Spanish, came their perceptions of women's roles—perceptions which limited her freedom and strength as an individual in decision making inside and outside the home" (Souder, 1977, p.6). They were made to feel ashamed of their nakedness and forced to be more modest. "Many restrictions were imposed on her by the new male dominated culture. She was no longer free to divorce or leave her home; her marriage became an eternal bond through the sacrament of matrimony" (Souder, 1977, p.6). Thirty years of Spanish-Chamorro Wars, 1670 to 1700 tragically saw a large number of the indigenous Chamorros killed due to disease and warfare (Souder, 1992, p.31). More men than women perished resulting in the end of the pure indigenous Chamorro. Many Chamorro women at this time had abortions as an act of rebellion. According to Gloria Mortera, the original population of about 150,000-100,000 Chamorros shrunk in size to about less than 5,000, by the end of the seventeenth century, which led to the import of mostly Filipino foreign laborers (Mortera, 1977,p.13). Souder wrote, "Because of its long and colorful history of colonization, many are skeptical that an indigenous culture even exists on Guam" (Souder, 1992, p.27). Thus the birth of the Guamanians: Chamorros

whom intermarried, interculturated, and procreated with Spanish, Filipinos, Europeans, Orientals, and Mexicans resulting in misgenation (Souder, 1992, p.32). The most prominent colonial influence that persists today is that of the Spanish. The Chamorro language has incorporated many Spanish words, as do many Chamorro families carry Spanish surnames. According to Souder the Chamorro woman of the nineteenth century had a unique ability, which was her strength, to resolve the conflicting cultures while maintaining her Chamorro identity, she made an extreme transition, “from her liberal aboriginal culture in one extreme to that of the rigid Spanish Christian tradition” (Souder, 1977, p.6). Mortera wrote in 1977 that the changes to ancient Chamorro culture over four hundred years of contact should not be looked at with sorrow, but rather she believed it was necessitated by progress, “Today’s Chamorro women, or more appropriately, today’s Guamanian women, are more capable of meeting the demands and challenge of the world than her ancient sisters primarily because of cultural changes,” wrote Mortera (Mortera, 1977,p.13). During ancient times it was the Chamorro woman whom orated the legends and history. Today, in modern Chamorro society, it is the women that facilitate the survival of the past.

## **V. Americanization of *Guåhan***

On June 20, 1898 the Charleston, a North American Cruiser arrived on the shores of Guam as the island was attached to the purchase agreement for the Philippines negotiated between Spain and the United States. Under the direction of U.S. President McKinley the Department of the Navy was to control Guam. In Souder’s opinion the Americanization of Guam worsened the effects of colonization on not just Chamorro women, but on Chamorro men as well. Female ideals were remade introducing the

American way of life through the consumption of media in the form of radio and television, the imposition of an American system of education, American health programs, and of course a new form of government (Souder, 1992, p.33). While women were still able to hold onto the power they possessed in the privacy of their home sphere, the establishment of the United States Naval government and officials resulted in the loss of Chamorro men's ability to exercise power, control, and influence in the public sphere (Souder, 1991, p.443). But then came the atrocious occupation of the Japanese who captured Guam on December 8, 1941 subjecting Chamorros to inhumane treatment in concentration camps, enforced manual labor, physical injuries, rape, and even death. Chamorros then put their hope in God and the American G.I.'s secretly singing, "Oh, Mr. Sam, Sam, my dear Uncle Sam, Won't you please come back to Guam?" According to Souder Chamorros were described as being more patriotic during these years than the patriots (Souder, 1992, p.34). On July 21, 1941 Americans liberated the Chamorros from the horrendous Japanese occupation, but the real question persists, was it really liberation? Despite four hundred years of outside influences to Chamorro culture and way of life, Guam, staying true to the pace of island time, has been slow to gain momentum in advancing the rights of its women and restoring their ancient matrilineal power. The early 1990s, both internationally and locally in Guam, were an exciting time for women's rights advocates as the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing proclaimed women's rights as human rights.

## **VI. The United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing 1995**

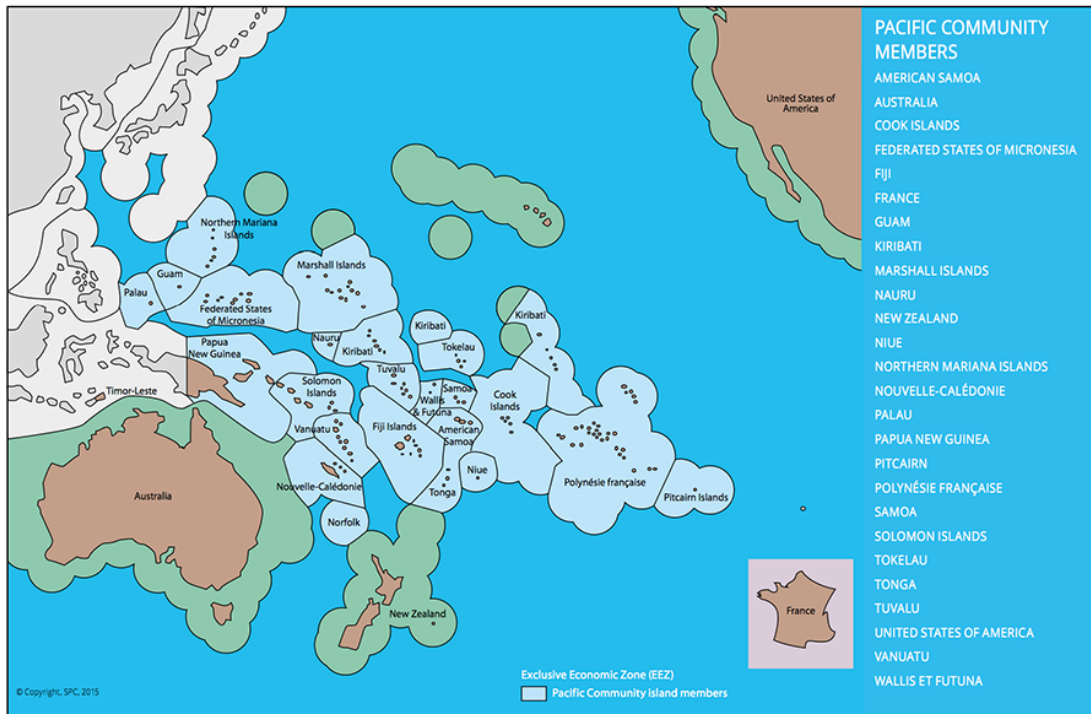
The United Nations Commission on the Status of Women organized and carried out the Fourth World Conference on Women in September 1995 in Beijing, China a call

for women's rights as human rights, producing a far seeing declaration for women's peace and equality. At the Fourth World Conference on Women there were twelve areas of critical concern that were identified in The Beijing Platform for Action: Women and Poverty, Education and Training of Women, Women and Health, Violence against Women, Women and Armed Conflict, Women and the Economy, Women in Power and Decision-making, Institutional Mechanism for the Advancement of Women, Human Rights of Women, Women and the Media, Women and the Environment, and The Girl-child (Fourth World Conference, 1995). It was at the UN's Fourth World Conference on Women that U.S. First Lady Hilary Rodham Clinton spoke up opposing the abuse of women, "It is a violation of human rights when women are denied the right to plan their own families, and that includes being forced to have abortions or being sterilized against their will" (Clinton, 1995). The priorities of key actors of the Guamanian women's movement at the time found that their international sisters echoed their concerns. Female representatives from Guam did indeed attend the Fourth World Conference in Beijing, two of which were Chamorro historian Laura Souder, and current Congresswoman Madeleine Z. Bordallo whom was Lieutenant Governor of Guam at the time. Souder recalled an exhilarating aura of international sisterhood at the meetings in Beijing (Souder, personal communication, Sept. 19, 2015). While the rest of the world's women's organizations and United Nations Commission on the Status of Women prepared for the conference in Beijing, simultaneously the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) drafted and adopted a regional charter: the Pacific Platform for Action on Advancement of Women and Gender Equality in 1994.



## **VII. The Secretariat of the Pacific Community & Pacific Platform for Action**

Since 1947, the SPC an international development organization and principal scientific and technical organization in the Pacific region, has been working for the well-being of Pacific people helping them achieve their development goals. Formerly known as the South Pacific Commission, the SPC was founded under the Canberra Agreement in Australia by the six participating governments of the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, the Netherlands, and France, that then administered territories in the Pacific. In an effort to bring stability to the post-Second World War affected region these four nations sought to jointly assist their dependent territories and Pacific populations. Twenty-two Pacific Island countries and territory and the four original founding nations are members and own and govern the SPC, Guam is one of these member territories. The work of the SPC focuses on issues they define as cross-cutting such as human rights, gender equality, food security, climate change, non-communicable diseases disaster risk management, and youth employment. In addition to numerous regional partners in the pacific, their international development partners include the European Union, The United States Agency for International Development (USAID), The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), the Government of Australia, and the New Zealand Government (Pacific Community Partners, 2011).



SPC 2011

The Pacific Platform for Action on the Advancement of Women and Gender Equality (PPA) was first adopted in 1994 in Noumea, agreed upon by 22 countries and territories of South Pacific, endorsing a plan of action and principles to advance gender quality in the region. It was then taken to the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, which then produced the Beijing Declaration and Beijing Platform for Action. In 2004 it was revised and emerged as the Revised Pacific Platform for Action on the Advancement of Women and Gender Equality (RPPA) 2005-2015. As written in the RPPA 2005-2015, “Since the Pacific Platform for Action (1994) and Beijing Platform for Action (1995) were adopted, Pacific Island countries and territories have used them to guide national and regional action and international cooperation to empower women in achieving political, legal, social, and cultural rights” (RPPA, 2005). In 2004, the PPA

was reviewed at the 9<sup>th</sup> Triennial Conference of Pacific Women and Second Pacific Ministers Meeting on Women in Nadi, Fiji, adopting the RPPA 2005-2015 as a ‘living document’ (RPPA, 2005). The Triennial Conferences of Pacific women is a monitoring body and process of the RPPA where representatives of governments and civil society responsible for the affairs of Pacific island women’s affairs join together every three years to review the progress in implementing the RPPA and discuss gender inequality issues in the Pacific and how to advance further in the future in the region. The most recent Triennial Conference of Pacific women was held in October 2013 in the Cook Islands (RPPA, 2005). The 2005-2015 RPPA is currently is under review. Two Guamanian government representatives attended the most recent meeting in the Cook Islands, the Honorable Judith T. Won Pat, Speaker of the 33<sup>rd</sup> Legislature of Guam and Mrs. Lorliee Crisostomo, Director Bureau of Statistics & Plans. Speaker Won Pat stated in an interview that attending the Twelfth Triennial Conference on Pacific Women in the Cook Islands was a humbling moment for her as she saw how far behind Guam her sisters from neighboring islands were in regards to their progress of advancing women. This she said made her appreciative of her personal journey and positioning on Guam.

The 2005-2015 RPPA regional charter had four strategic themes: Mechanisms to promote the advancement of women, Women’s legal and human rights, Women’s access to services, and Economic empowerment of women (RPPA, 2005). Additionally, it included, “recommendations to address emerging critical challenges and issues such as poverty, globalization and trade liberalization, HIV/AIDS, labour migration, peace and security, tradition and religion, media and communication technology” (RPPA, 2005). In March 2005 the Commission on the Status of Women reviewed and appraised the

implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Ms. Rosario G. Manalo, Chairperson Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in a her opening statement to the Twenty-Third Special Session of the General Assembly for the Review and Appraisal of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action said,

The past ten years have seen important advances for women in their pursuit of equality. The Committee congratulates those 35 States that have become party to the Convention since the Beijing Conference. While the total number of States parties now stands at 179, the Committee regrets that this number falls short of universal ratification of the Convention by the year 2000 called for in the Platform...the Committee encourages all those who have not yet become party to these key instruments for the protection and promotion of the human rights of women to intensify their efforts so that the goal of universal ratification of the Convention can be achieved soonest, and that the Optional Protocol can become an effective means for redress for women in all States parties. (Manalo, 28 February -11 March 2005).

The review and appraisal sought to identify what initiatives and actions were most urgent for further implementation, where the challenges and gaps were, and how to nationally encourage implementation of Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (Ten Year Review, 2005). Attendees to the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing recounted the impact on Guam to be inspirational, but not entirely direct in their opinion and observations. Souder, whom was energized by the international community of sisters that's surrounded her said there was a consciousness at Beijing that they undeniably had to put women in the formal agenda. She said as a result many governments established

offices of women's affairs that still exist today, over twenty years later. These offices coordinate the efforts of celebrating International Women's Day, March 8<sup>th</sup>, and in America the entire month of March is Women's History Month. Souder stated in an interview that the consciousness of putting women on the agenda and establishing offices that dealt with women's issues was put on record as a result of Beijing but she does not know what the legacy of the office has been,

Now I cannot say with any degree of certainty whether or not those really functioned as advocacy offices for women. But for example on Guam there is a tremendous increasing consciousness of child abuse, women abuse, domestic violence. You cannot turn on TV here on Guam without seeing public service announcements related to domestic violence or child abuse. So there is a lot of consciousness that has been built around those issues that have been traditionally viewed as women's issues, that are really community issues, but are often viewed as women's issues and women take leadership in these issues such as things like sexual harassment. (Souder, personal communication, Sept.19, 2015).

The early 1990s, found members of the Guam legislature advocating for the establishment of an overdue rape crisis center for the island fueled by the earlier movement in the 1970s and 1980s in the United States to get rape victims out of emergency rooms and into their own clinics where they could be attended to in sensitive and timely manner. Because rapes are not like a heart attack or stroke, they fall further down the totem pole in a triage where the sickest people must be attended to first. Often times rape victims were left sitting in emergency room for hours neglected, told not to use the restroom, eat, or drink resulting in revictimization in some cases.

## **VIII. The Necessity of Healing Hearts Rape Crisis Center**

A rape crisis center was established through the Government of Guam's Department of Mental Health in the early 1990s. Consequently, Dr. Ellen Bez moved to Guam from the East Coast of the United States mainland after graduating from her residency and she began volunteering her time helping nurses conduct pelvic exams. Bez commented that Guam sometimes lags about a decade or so behind the United States mainland, rationalizing the delayed creation of Healing Hearts, "I think part of that movement to take better care of victims and certainly their human rights were not being taken care of in more traditional emergency room kind of settings so that's how Healing Hearts got started" (Bez, personal communication, Dec. 14, 2015). Since 1997 Dr. Bez remains the medical consultant of the Healing Hearts Crisis Center charged with training nurses and conducting forensic exams.

Unfortunately, the need for a rape crisis center has not decreased over the past two decades. Bez proudly stated Healing Hearts has maintained a twenty-four hour call schedule for over twenty years, as Guam is no exception in regards to the worldwide phenomenon of women as victims of violence. Local headlines are so frequently filled with accounts of sexual assault and rape that the island community is arguably desensitized to the abuse. On February 2, 2015 Guam's *Pacific Daily News (PDN)* front page headline stated in bold lettering, "Guam Rape Rate 2<sup>nd</sup> Highest in US" (Miculka, 2015). Author of the news article, reporter Cameron Miculka wrote, "According to national and local statistics, Guam's per capita rate of reported forcible rape is more than twice the national average. Neither local nor national data take into account the number of unreported rapes, which make up the vast majority of all attacks, according to federal

surveys” (Miculka, 2015, para. 2&3.). Dr. Ellen Bez, MD, medical consultant for Healing Hearts Rape Crisis Center of the Guam Behavioral Health and Wellness Center said in an interview that for years she has remained skeptical of the media reports comparing a community the size of Guam to be twice the national average of sexual assault, Bez even went as far as to speak directly with people at the *PDN* about not being happy with the way they extrapolate their data. Miculka reported Bez stated that, “she wouldn't be surprised that Guam's per capita rate was higher than in the U.S.,” suggesting possible contributing factors to be, “large households and the presence of migrants who come from communities where sexual assault doesn't carry the same consequences it does here” (Miculka, 2015, para.12). According to Bez, the statistics collected by Healing Hearts indicate that the majority of victims are Chamorro, but she believes that the Micronesian Islander populations per capita are more at risk, particularly she said the Chuukese population as in their communities they don't have laws on the books congruent to Guam's laws. Bez said, in Chuuk, “it's okay for a father, uncles and friends of fathers to literally do whatever he wants to his daughter or niece, so they grow up with those lack of laws,” (Bez, personal communication, Dec. 14, 2015). Bez believes the solution to be education of parents. She said parents must be educated of what the laws are on Guam, especially those belonging to lower-socioeconomic class as she said they are at greater risk. “Rape crosses all socioeconomic boundaries, in general you can say people who are underserved, people who don't have resources to be well educated and have exposure to the things they need are most at risk” stated Bez. “You see it in rich families, you see it in poor families, but of course people who are underserved are at greater risk and I think you see that here that's what causes our numbers to be high” (Bez,

personal communication, Dec. 14, 2015). The intersectionality of Chuukese and Chamorro women's lives that Bez referred to is but one example of the intersection of multiple forms of discrimination of gender, ethnicity, class, race, sexual orientation, age, marital status, religion, disability, and/or HIV status, women experience influencing how and what forms of violence women experience (UNiTE Human Rights Violation, n.d.). According to the United Nation's Secretary-General's Campaign UNiTE to End Violence Against Women up to seven in ten women worldwide at some point in their lives experience sexual and/or physical violence. Additionally, domestic violence is not yet considered a crime in countries where 603 million women reside. UNiTE's fast facts state, even pregnant women are not exempt from violence, as many as one in four pregnant women experience sexual or physical violence potentially leading to serious health consequences for both mother and baby. According to World Bank data girls and women aged fifteen to forty-four are more at risk from domestic violence and rape than from malaria, war, cancer, and car accidents. Global studies have affirmed links between violence against women and HIV/AIDS.

Young women are particularly vulnerable to coerced sex and are increasingly being infected with HIV/AIDS. Over half of new HIV infections worldwide are occurring among young people between the ages of 15 and 24, and more than 60 per cent of HIV-positive youth in this age bracket are female. Women who are beaten by their partners are 48 percent more likely to be infected with HIV/AIDS. (UNiTE Human Rights Violation, n.d.). The *PDN* report highlighted the common problem of under reporting rapes both on Guam and nationally. Bez called this, "the culture of just being quiet," adding that no matter the rate of unreported rapes it is an issue deserving of the utmost urgency. Healing

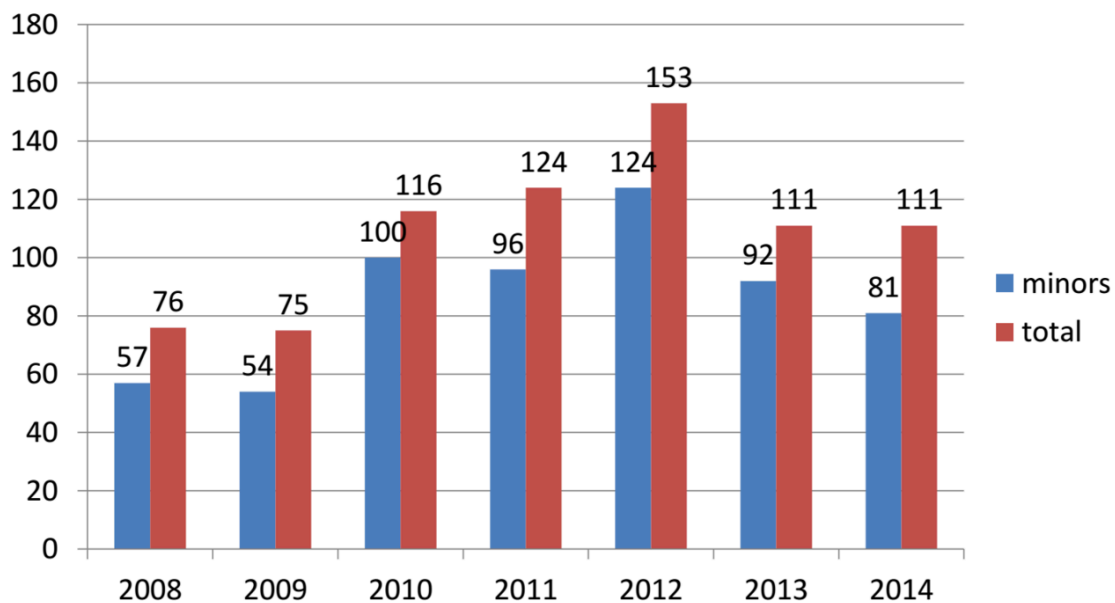


Hearts Crisis Center (HHCC) has made numerous attempts to organize, coordinate, and facilitate support groups providing a safe space for victims to converse. Bez said, “I’ve offered to pay for taxis, give them dinner, whatever it takes to get these women in, but it seems impossible, it always falls flat. There’s obviously something to the culture of not talking about it” (Bez, personal communication, Dec.14, 2015). Bez added disclosure is particularly non-transparent when the victims are male as in her experience very few men have come through HHCC’s doors. But once in a blue moon someone courageously speaks out, as was the case of Guamanian Monique Baza who in 2012 was kidnapped from a local Guam bakery parking lot and subsequently raped. Bez said in her twenty-two years as a medical examiner for Healing Hearts Baza became the first victim that she examined to become publicly vocal after an assault. It was clear to Bez that becoming a strong advocate was how Baza had chosen to help heal.

In addition to directly harming the abused victim, possible loss of productivity and employment as a result of violence, violence against women is also costly to governments in the process of bringing perpetrators to justice because the government incurs costs to support and treat the victim and her children (UNiTE Human Rights Violation, n.d.). “The cost of intimate partner violence in the United States alone exceeds \$5.8 billion per year: \$4.1 billion is for direct medical and health care services, while productivity losses account for nearly \$1.8 billion” (UNiTE Human Rights Violation, n.d.). Guam certainly has incurred costs as a result of providing vital services to victims of gender-based violence. HHCC statistics from 2008 through 2014 are representative of only a fraction of Criminal Sexual Conducts (CSC) as HHCC only handles cases that involved skin-to-skin contact. The 2008-2014 HHCC statistics revealed a higher number

of victims that are minors as compared to victims that are of adult age. In 2008: fifty-seven victims were minors and nineteen adults, 2009: fifty-four minors and twenty-one adults, 2010: one hundred minors and sixteen adults, 2011: ninety-six minors and twenty-eight adults, 2012: one hundred and twenty-four minors, twenty-nine adults, 2013: ninety-two minors and nineteen adults, 2014: eighty-one minors and thirty adults.

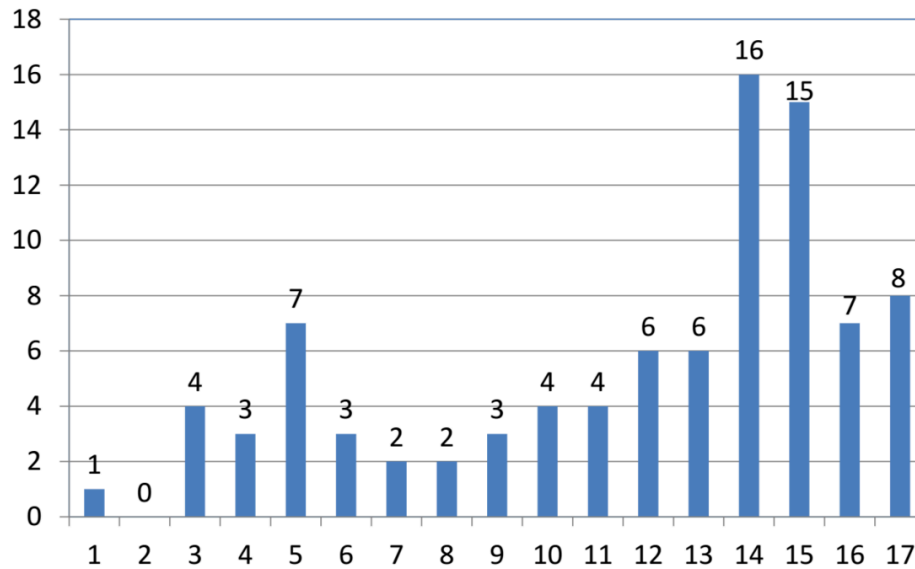
## Comparison of Minors & Total Population



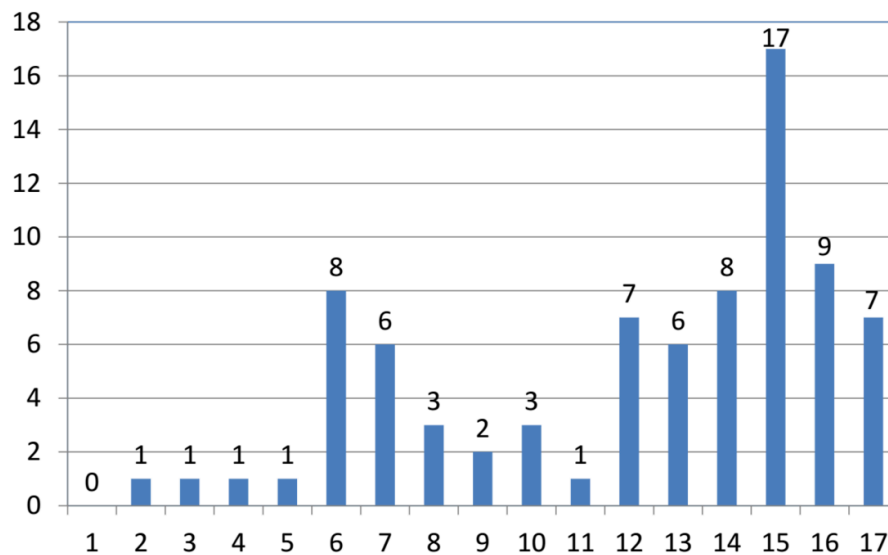
HHCC Statistics 2008-2014

The ages of minors range from one to seventeen.

## Age Range for Minors 2013

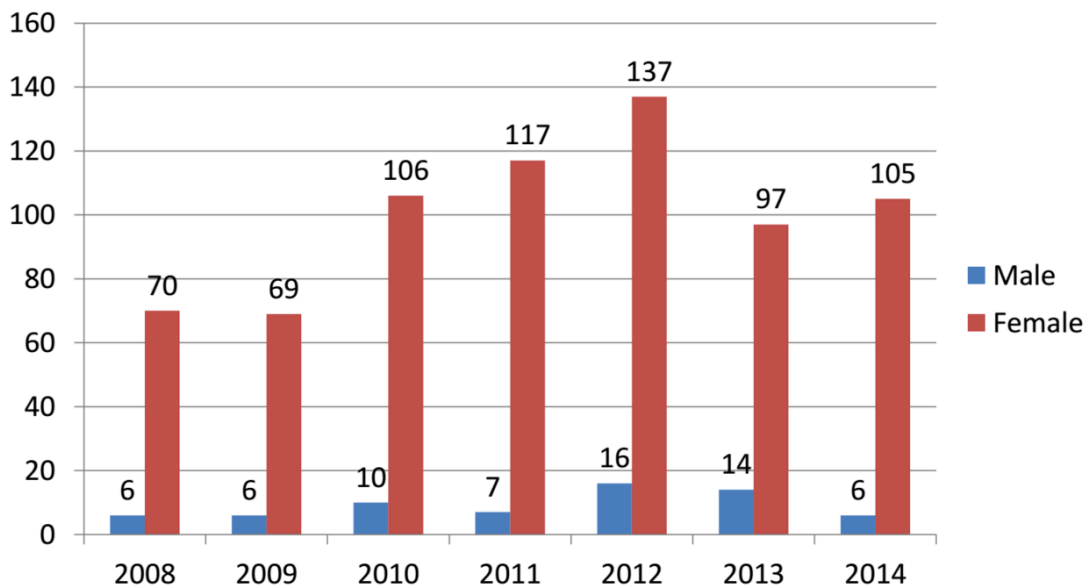


## Age Range for Minors 2014



As for the gender served at HHCC from 2008 to 2014 far more females than males came through the center. Only six men came to HHCC in 2008, 2009, and 2014. HHCC served ten men in 2010, seven men in 2011, sixteen men in 2012, and fourteen men in 2013. In comparison seventy women were served by HHCC in 2008, sixty-nine in 2009, one hundred and six in 2010, one hundred and seventeen in 2011, one hundred and thirty-seven in 2012, ninety-seven in 2013, and one hundred and five in 2014.

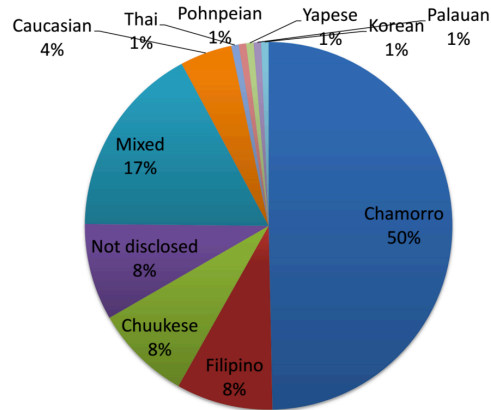
## Gender Served from 2008 to 2014



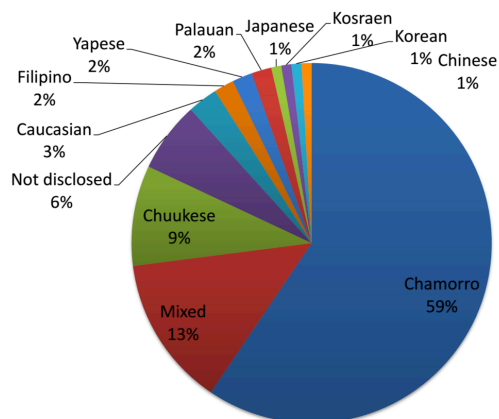
HHCC Statistics 2008-2014

As stated by Bez, the ethnicity that has been consistently in the majority of victims that HHCC serves is the Chamorros. In 2012, fifty percent were Chamorro, saw an increase in Chamorro's served to fifty-nine percent, and 2014 saw a slight decline to forty-five percent Chamorro.

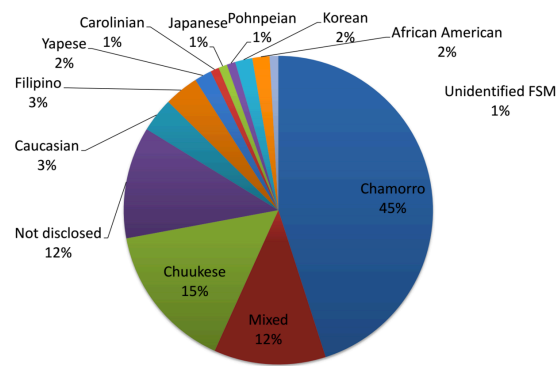
## Ethnicity Served in 2012



## Ethnicity Served in 2013



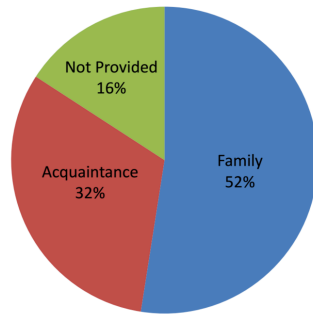
## Ethnicity Served in 2014



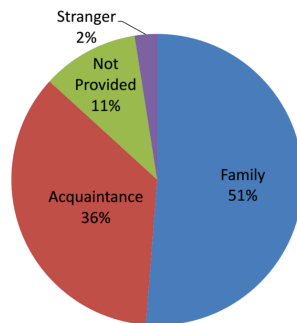
HHCC Statistics 2008-2014

The HHCC 2008-2014 statistics also identified the perpetrator's relationship to the victim as majority family members, secondly acquaintances (which includes internet companions), and minority strangers.

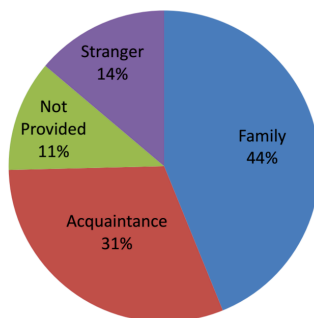
### Relationship to Victim 2012



### Relationship to Victim 2013



### Relationship to Victim 2014



HHCC Statistics 2008-2014

The Guam Police Department's STOP VAW campaign 2014 data, which is inclusive of HHCC statistics, reported the total number of cases/reports of Family Violence in 2014 (FV) to be three hundred and four to the Guam Coalition Against Sexual Assault and Family Violence, one hundred and seventy-two reports of Criminal Sexual Conduct (CSC), and seventeen reports of Stalking. Comparatively the number of arrests that were made in connection to FV were two hundred and fifty-two, CSC: seventy-five, and Stalking: ten.

#### STOP-VAW Summary January-July 2014

STALKING January-July 2014		Gender of Victim		Age of Victim			Ethnicity of Victim							
	Total number of victims	Female	Male	<17	18-34	35>	Chamorro	Filipino	Korean	Caucasian	Chinese	Chuukese	Yapese	Other
JAN	2	1	1	0	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
FEB	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
MAR	2	1	1	0	0	2	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
APR	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
MAY	2	2	0	1	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
JUN	4	3	1	1	0	3	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
JUL	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	12	9	3	2	2	8	9	2	1	0	0	0	0	0
FAMILY VIOLENCE July 2014		Gender of Victim		Age of Victim			Ethnicity of Victim							
	# of victims	Female	Male	<17	18-34	35>	Chamorro	Filipino	Korean	Caucasian	Chinese	Chuukese	Yapese	Other
July	23	20	3	1	12	10	14	0	0	1	1	5	1	1
CRIMINAL SEXUAL CONDUCT July 2014		Gender of Victim		Age of Victim			Ethnicity of Victim							
	# of victims	Female	Male	<17	18-34	35>	Chamorro	Filipino	Korean	Caucasian	Chinese	Chuukese	Yapese	Other
July	12	10	2	7	5	0	6	3	2	0	0	1	0	0
	All Offenses	Female	Male	<17	18-34	35>	Chamorro	Filipino	Korean	Caucasian	Chinese	Chuukese	Yapese	Other
Total	47	39	8	10	19	18	29	5	3	1	1	6	1	1

These statistics yield that seventy-five percent of reporting stalking victims were women, eighty-seven percent of reported family violence victims were women, and eighty-three percent of criminal sexual conduct victims were also women. Of the total above offenses eighty-three percent of victims were women. It is important to highlight the challenges in data collection around sensitive subject issues such as sexual assault and family violence. Due to the stigmatized nature of sexual and family violence it is common that instances

of violence are often not documented or reported as victims perhaps fear for their safety or are ashamed of what has occurred. This leads to serious discrepancies on island, thus minimizing both its severity and need for public attention. Another challenge faced by those who work in this difficult field is hiring and retaining staff. Bez stated, “there is a high rate of burn out for both the social work side of the business and the medical side of the business, its just hard hearing those kinds of stories all the time” (Bez, personal communication, Dec.14, 2015). Being a female victim of violence is but a couple of intersectional characteristics of identity, often the women that come to Healing Hearts have compounded multilayered identities defined by their culture, faith, and existing pregnancy. American Professor Kimberlé Crenshaw whom is credited with coining the term intersectionality considers how the social world is constructed by accounting for the multiple grounds of identity (Crenshaw, 1245, July 1991). Bez said she has had patients who were already pregnant when they came in for their exam. Bez herself feels she is a bit of an outsider in regard to the Catholic community of Guam as she is not Catholic and she is adamantly pro-choice. At Healing Hearts, she does prescribe the morning after pill, but she does not get involved with any conversations about the religious aspect of that, she simply presents it as an option, details what exactly it does and answers further questions without interjecting her personal bias. “I tell them what’s available, and what’s here and it’s up to them,” stated Bez (Bez, personal communication, Dec.14, 2015). She does however speak to patients about the treatment of STDs. Bez stated that Healing Hearts is not like Planned Parenthood where there are medical procedures to terminate pregnancies, she assumed this is perhaps why she has never enraged or had issue with the religious community on island. “We haven’t crossed paths with any of the religious



community here because we don't offer terminations, other than directing patients if they want a termination. I don't think we interface with the religious community at all," said Bez (Bez, personal communication, Dec.14, 2015). Bez's pregnant victims have gone on to have the child and she said either a family member has assumed care for it or it has been given up for adoption. The majority of Guam's unwanted pregnancies do not only result solely from rape, another statistic that has been reported to be twice that of the national average is Guam's high rate of teenage pregnancy.

### **IX. High Rate of Teen Births & Lack of Standardized Sexual Education in the Public School System**

On February 16, 2014 Guam's *Pacific Daily News* published an article with the headline: "Teen pregnancy brings risk, that reported Guam's high teen pregnancy rate is about twice that of the national average meaning long-term economic consequences for young moms and their families and potentially serious health risks for both mom and baby" (Aoki, 2014). Guam's Department of Public Health and Social Services compiled data for the 2013 Guam Statistical Yearbook on Teen Births and Birth Rate for Persons Aged 15 to 17 years for years 2005 through 2013. In 2005, there was a total of 149 teens that gave birth, a teen birth rate of 46.6 per 1,000 population. In 2006 the total of teen births dropped to 85, with a teen birth rate of 24.6 per 1,000 populations. In 2007 the total climbed to 141 teen births, a teen birthrate of 40.3 and in 2008 the total teen births was 147, a rate of 42.2. In 2009, 121 was the total teen births, a rate of 35.3 and in 2010 a total of 126 teen births, a rate of 36.9. 2011 saw a slight increase from the previous year with a total of 138 teen births, a rate of 41.8 and 2012 saw a drop to 98 teen births, a rate of 25.5. 2013 yielded the lowest of all nine years with a total of 77 teen births a rate of

21.7 per 1,000 populations.

Table 12-09 . Teen Births and Birth Rate for Persons Aged 15 to 17 years, Guam: 2009 to 2013

Type	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009
Total Live Births	3,542	3,604	3,298	3,419	3,428
Total Teen Births	77	92	138	126	121
Teen Birth Rate	21.7	25.5	41.8	36.9	35.3

Source: Department of Public Health and Social Services, Guam

Note: Birth rate per 1,000 population

Table 12-10 . Teen Births and Birth Rate for Persons Aged 15 to 17 years, Guam: 2005 to 2008

Type	2008	2007	2006	2005
Total Live Births	3,466	3,493	3,414	3,203
Total Teen Births	147	141	85	149
Teen Birth Rate	42.4	40.3	24.6	46.6

Source: Department of Public Health and Social Services, Guam

Note: Birth rate per 1,000 population

Guam Statistical Yearbook 2013, 2014, p. 168

Guam attorney Anita Arriola offered possible explanations for this consistently high rate of young expecting Guamanian moms,

There are so many issues relating to teenage pregnancy its hard to narrow it down because there are so many issues relating to what is our culture, certainly in our culture its really kind of taken for granted that her immediate as well as her extended family and the father's family are all going to step in and take care of the baby, its not as stigmatized here in Guam as it is in other jurisdictions. The other part of it is there is definitely a big correlation between the high pregnancy rate and the failure or the lack of sex education in our public schools, and private schools and a lack of access to contraception. When you have our priests giving sermons from the pulpit saying contraceptives kill girls, and that has honestly happened, my niece told me that she was at a mass at the May crowning of the virgin Mary and he gave a homily in which he informed the Academy girls that contraceptives could kill girls and when you have that kind of an influence and

you don't have a counter veiling or opposition to counter those kinds of messages you are going to get girls who are uninformed about sex and uninformed about contraception and as a result of that. (Arriola, personal communication, Sept. 29, 2015).

Currently, Guam's population as previously stated is predominately Roman Catholic, a faith that has its congregation recite in unison Pope John Paul II's Respect Life prayer calling on Mother Mary to look down upon the vast number of babies not allowed to be born. Bez said because of the dominance of Catholicism in Guam the island is an excellent community to conduct studies in because not many populations are exclusively one religion, "This community is ninety percent Catholic and you don't move, here you have a closed community. I think the Church plays a huge influential role, women's rights issues just don't seem to be as important" (Bez, personal communication, Dec. 14, 2015). According to lawyer Anita Arriola the powers of the Catholic Church on Guam today are actively exerting its influence more and more on its congregation, but she believes the island's congregation to be a smarter congregation that is making up their own minds. In addition to the Catholic faith's influential power over a women's reproductive right to choose, the high rate of teen pregnancy is directly a result of an absence of a standardized, governmentally mandated sexual educational in the Guam public school system. According to Office of the Governor of Guam's Bureau of Statistics and Plans in SY 2013-2014 there was a total of 39,771 students kindergarten through twelfth grade. Of those 39,771 students, 30,955 attended the island's public schools. Of the remaining 8,816 students, 4,058 attended Catholic private schools, 2,523 attended other private schools, and the remaining 2,235 attended DoDEA (Guam's Facts

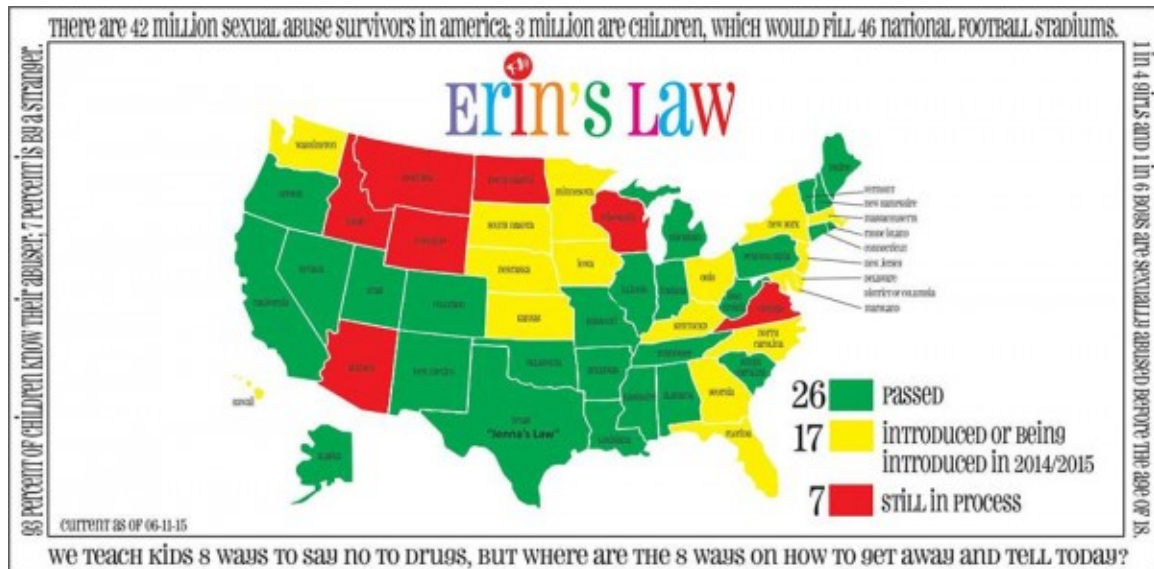
& Figures, 2014). Believe it or not up until the fall semester of 2016 Guam's public school system left it up to each individual school district to decide when and what sexual education information was administered to students. This meant children attending schools in neighboring villages on an island that is a meager thirty-three miles long and eight to ten miles wide, were receiving information varying by timing and content in regards to sexual education. On September 30, 2011 Governor Eddie Baza Calvo signed into law the 31<sup>st</sup> Guam Legislature's Public Law 31-97 "Relative to creating a task force on the prevention of sexual abuse of children within the child protective act" (Bill No. 173-31, 2011). On October 4, 2011, Article 4: The LaniKate *Protehi Y Famagu'on-ta* Act was added detailing the composition of the task force, the duties of the task force on the prevention of sexual abuse of children, the recommendations of the task force, and the policies addressing sexual abuse including age-appropriate curriculum for students, child sexual abuse training for school personnel, educational information for parents or guardians in the school handbook, along with assistance, referral, or resource information, available counseling, resources, emotional, and educational support for students (Bill No. 173-31, 2011). Bez said she is but one of a group of people that have been tirelessly working for years with several administrators of the Guam Department of Education to have legislation passed mandating standardized sexual education programs. "We finally got legislation passed mandating sex education in school systems, K all the way through twelve," said Bez. "We are now in the process of training. I think I am scheduled after the first of year to do some of the education to teach some of these teachers as they are obviously different for the different age groups" (Bez, personal communication, Dec. 14, 2015). Bez explained the legislation is Erin's Law, named after

a survivor of childhood sexual assault, requiring that a prevention-oriented child sexual abuse program be implemented in all public schools all public schools. Twenty-six of the United States have passed Erin's law with seventeen pending states. According to Bez, survivor Erin Merryn was critical of the Illinois school system as she said the one thing that happens to kids all the time nobody teachings anything about it in schools. Merryn said in school we learn about all this stuff that never happens to us like fire drills and air raids, but the one thing that happens to kids all the time, which unfortunately is being sexually abused, no one teaches anything about this. Guam's law echoes the three requirements of Erin's law:

1. Students in grades preK – 12th grade, age-appropriate techniques to recognize child sexual abuse and tell a trusted adult.
2. School personnel all about child sexual abuse.
3. Parents & guardians the warning signs of child sexual abuse, plus needed assistance, referral or resource information to support sexually abused children and their families. (What is Erin's, 2012).

Bez attributed the final push to the Department of Education and the Office of the Attorney General who she said spearheaded the passage of the legislation. The programs that Guam will be using come out of Hawaii, so the curriculum in Bez's opinion is already a bit culturally sensitive in terms of appealing to a Pacific Island population. Minor tweaking to align the programs with Guam laws took place, yielding programs that Bez believes do just what they need them to do to teach children about personal safety issues. However, this mandate is limited to the public schools. Bez said they have yet to approach private schools about adopting the program, but it has been discussed. The

implementation of the program is scheduled to start in April 2016 with kindergarten through fifth grade, giving ample time in the summer to assess how the program was delivered and received.



2012 Erin's Law

But the responsibility of educating children about sexual abuse does not fully lie with the school system. Schools do not have the capacity to do everything as often many parents expect them to, nor should they have to bear all burdens. Parents and guardians must also prioritize their participation and education. Bez is a big believer in parenting groups, “I am somebody who would mandate the court to require parenting classes for these kids who time and time again are in jeopardy, I see kids who are repeaters at Healing Hearts, you know bad things happening to them,” said Bez, “We really need active parents who are involved and committed to get their kids raised in an appropriate way” (Bez, personal communication, Dec. 14, 2015). Bez is not alone in her belief that kids are our future. Souder and her husband’s current work in the island community are focusing on child education and literacy.

The role of educator has traditionally been ascribed feminine attributes. When the

majority of Chamorro women entered the workforce they did so as teachers. Today, the female senators of Guam's 33<sup>rd</sup> Legislature continue to embody the traditional gender roles characteristic of Chamorro women as they belong to committee's representing education and other "second" generation rights meaning Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ESCR). Because Guam's political and professional sectors are speckled with women leaders there is an illusion of gender equality amongst the island community. Speaker Won Pat is on the Committee on Higher Education, Culture, Public Libraries, and Women's Affairs. Legislative Secretary Tina Rose Muña Barnes is on the Committee on Municipal Affairs, Tourism, Housing and Historic Preservation. Senator Nerissa Bretania Underwood, Ph.D. is on the Committee on Early Learning, Juvenile Justice, Public Education and First Generation Initiatives (33rd Guam Legislature, 2015).

The right to education is a positive ESCR as the state is required to provide individuals with education. Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) declares that everyone has the right to education, it shall be compulsory and free in elementary years, strengthening respect for fundamental freedoms and respect for human rights, promoting understanding, friendship, and tolerance among all religious and racial groups and nations with the aim of furthering the United Nation's maintenance of peace. Furthermore, parents shall choose what kind of education their child receives (The Universal Declaration, 1948). Souder acknowledges that people in the community are discussing it, but she does not think that there is a collective consciousness that recognizes that we are failing our children miserably. Through the living case of young Chuukese students, Souder pointed out the detrimental outcome from intersections of ethnicity and gendered practices within a culture when combined with education. In a

classroom Souder observed Chuukese girls rarely raising their hands to participate in class discussion. After inquiry she was told that the girls were observing a Chuukese cultural practice in which Chuukese girls cannot speak without first asking the permission of Chuukese males. In a 21<sup>st</sup> century school setting Souder believes this practice be dysfunctional. “Certain things might make sense in one context but are totally dysfunctional in another context. There’s a lot of what happens to women today that’s mixed up in all of this,” said Souder, “Those are the kinds of things we need to be conscious of, we can’t use culture as a crutch for dysfunctional behavior” (Souder, personal communication, date). In addition to being dysfunctional, the above referred to cultural practice is detrimental to Chuukese girl’s ability to acquire skills and learn. Souder is critical of the recent lack of tangible action taken on Guam. She said a lot of what is done is simply paying lip service to issues, engaging with them on a surface level. She asked when you get down to where the rubber meets the road how are we addressing the real issues or our growing number of students lacking the skills that they need to be successful in schools? Are communities rallying around the issue of building authentic literacy? Are our teachers in our classrooms aware of the students they are teaching and aware of how they have to change their teaching strategies to engage students that they have never taught before.

Were great at talking about issues in general and in lofty terms and we espouse our commitment to things like ending child abuse, ending sexual abuse, and yet we continue to do the same types of things that perpetuate these trends and grow them rather than reduce them. I think we need to put on a different type of lens and look at the issue clearly and look at how what were doing has to change if



you want the situation to change. Its not enough to say we care about crime we want a safe community, what contributes to criminality, you have to dig deep and do a cause analysis and understand that everyone has a stake in this so that crime is not just an issue for law enforcement and the courts and the criminal justice system, its an issue that everyone has to pay attention to because little kids that are not functioning properly when they are 3,4,5 years old in families become criminals in the their 50s, 60s, and 70s. We have to make the connections and pay attention. We need to learn how to better collaborate and put our collective talents to work square in the face. (Souder, Sept. 19, 2015).

#### **X. Feminism a White Woman's World**

As of 1991, the University of Guam (UOG) had yet to formally establish a women's studies program, but Souder reported there was a growing interest in a woman-centered curriculum amongst UOG students. UOG was host to several workshops and the 1989 Women of the Pacific Conference that was attended by over two hundred women from Guam's Western Pacific island neighbors. The second Women of the Pacific Conference was hosted July 1991 in the Republic of Belau (Palau). Souder reflected on the impact of the conferences as she wrote, "These gathering have provided unique and unprecedented opportunities for Micronesian women of diverse backgrounds to share perspectives on women's issues, to develop a Micronesian-focused research agenda, and to discuss and come to terms with feminism" (Souder, 1991). The feminist movement rose in the United States in the nineteenth century (Neier, 2012). By 1904 the proponents of suffrage broke away from the International Women's Council (IWC) to form the International Women's Suffrage Association (IWSA) focusing their efforts on winning

full incorporation of women into world nation's political citizenship. According to Jean H. Quataert, the IWC along with the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), a group dedicated to opposing national and international use of force and violence, helped mold the transition into the human rights era post-1945 of the organized feminist movement. The early twentieth century of the feminist movement saw a focus of leadership and power geographically on the Atlantic region, alienating the rest of the world's women. Compounded with the added characteristics that the majority of prominent members were not only western but also possessed high levels of education and middle-class status. However the leadership did launch of tour around the world to engage with non-Western feminists (Quataert, 2009, p.25). This tour obviously did not have the capabilities of reaching all women around the globe, Guam and the Micronesian region was not visited on that particular journey. According to Aryeh Neier, co-founder of Human Rights Watch, the feminist movement shifted overtime, all the while maintaining the sense of belonging to singular movement. Hilary Charlesworth argued that the devaluing of women and patriarchy is universal, she wrote it just happens to manifest differently in different societies. Why then do Guamanian women continue to find it difficult to call themselves feminists? Souder said because the movement was largely a white, middle-class, highly educated movement in the United States, non-western feminists viewed the movement as perpetuating some of the notions of colonialism and white imperialism because they observed that western feminism did not address issues related to racism, ethnocentrism and the colonial reality. Charlesworth deemed this essentialism: "a conceptual problem for all feminist analysis...assuming that all women have similar attributes and experiences and ignoring the impact of other

variables such as race, class, wealth, and sexual preference on the position of women” (Cook, 1994, p. 62) Along with Asian women and women of color, Pacific Islander women began to reject the ideas that Western feminists were proposing, which was a radical departure from the Victorian era. The proposed ideas were not reflective of how they understood their life experiences because what happened in their lives wasn’t just influenced by their gender, but also by their race, ethnicity, ideology and their colonial experience that was imposed upon motivated by a whole economic system. It was the intersectionality of their identity as Guamanian women that made it difficult for them to relate to feminists in the mainland United States. Souder’s report, *Feminism and Women’s Studies on Guam* provides a snapshot of the conceptions on Guam surrounding feminism in 1991. She wrote that most Chamorro women at this time were uncomfortable labeling themselves feminists as they associated the term with Western middle-class educated women. She wrote that like elsewhere patriarchal institutions on Guam perpetuated misconceptions concerning feminism adding further resistance combined with the skeptical attitude that perhaps feminism was just another imperialistic tool disguised as a women’s rights movement (Souder, 1991, p.444). Charlesworth attributes the variations in feminist theory to its very basis, which is the genuine experience of women. Their intersectional identities yield unlike power relations among women and no one single “women’s point of view,” but Charlesworth insisted on the imperativeness of acknowledging what cultures do share in common.

Vivian Loyola Dames wrote that although the position of Chamorro women in relation to their husbands has changed over time, the centrality of motherhood to their identity has not, “Motherhood provides a context through which Chamorro women

exercise power and control, in both the family and other spheres of society” (Dames, 2003, p. 368). Motherhood is further engrained in Chamorro identity as their creation myth attributes a woman as giving birth to all that exists. Perhaps this is why after Chamorros converted Catholicism they revered the mother Mary of Jesus, Dames wrote, “Marianisma, which defined three possible roles for women—as virgin, wife, and mother” (Dames, 2003, p.368). Thus, since ancient times Chamorro women have found their space and sphere of power and influence tied directly to the home, family, and connected to their role as mother. This domestic sphere that is distinctly feminine is what western feminists were saying was their disempowerment in their context. This is where Chamorro advocates of women’s rights and Western feminist diverge. The disconnect between Guamanian feminists and Western feminists thrive as many Chamorro women reject the notions of western feminism on the basis that they have different kinds of experiences. Souder wrote in the early 1990s that generally feminists view the source of female subordination to be their role as child-bearers, Chamorro women stand at the opposite pole as maternal role in their culture is what embodies their authority, “it is difficult for Chamorro women to view motherhood as a source of oppression. Rather, it has been a traditional source of power and prestige for them” (Souder, 1991, p.445). Even though Chamorro women were operating in the context of their home, in Chamorro culture the home has primacy. Chamorro women enjoyed a great degree of personal and familial power, particularly once mothers, organizing in an informal way that was reflective of traditional cultural values and practices, despite not being represented in the decision-making processes of the formal sphere.

In his time at UOG Professor Bevacqua has observed a tendency on Guam to

dismiss critical disciplines from the United States because of an assumption that it doesn't exist on Guam, it only exists elsewhere. He encountered this when he inquired why there was no ethnic studies department at UOG. Students and faculty sang a similar tune in response to the push for a women and gender studies department, "With feminism they say there's no sexism here, we treat our women with respect, we love our women, it's the same sort of thing that people do when they use another community and then you kind of erase all your own problems" said Bevacqua (Bevacqua, personal communication, Oct. 1, 2015). Bevacqua said at one time UOG did have one full time faculty position for women and gender studies. He credits the demise of the program to the fact that the majority of the instructors were Westerners that were new to the island, lacking a strong connection to the local community, never truly making it their home, and bringing with them their lens and intersectional identity defined by class, ethnicity, and nationality. These women presented their First World Feminism to a largely brown student body that identified more with a Second World and even Third World Feminism. He said this first world humanitarian intervention feminism was presented as belonging to outsiders and that inevitably trickled down into the classroom, and the instructors critiques and analysis. Since the university reduced the program to just affiliated faculty and a certificate program that does not even appear on their transcript, Dr. Bevacqua has been hosting events to with the aim of showing students that feminism is not just a white women thing, highlighting Chamorro and Micronesian women's issues such as sexual harassment awareness on campus. Bevacqua's hope for the future of department is bleak he said it is extremely unlikely that it will ever get a full a time faculty position again, "For women's and gender studies, its normally not seen as a good thing. I really found

that to be very interesting on how mixing gender into the equation turns the outside perception of it is negative” (Bevacqua, personal communication, Oct. 1, 2015). Many of the students that attend UOG, particularly migrant student from Micronesia do not have long experiences with higher education. Bevacqua postulated that this is why it is organic for students to perceive things as an outsider’s thinking, when discussing the topic of abortion with his students the response of the Micronesian students were to say that it is a Guam thing, it was not their thing. Similarly, Chamorro students have said that abortion belongs to white women in the Mainland that do not care about their families. If Guamanian university students on the island will not identify as feminists then how might they advocate for lifting up and improving the lives of islander women? Charlesworth wrote that many societies designate women to be in a constant disadvantaged position, but the human rights discourse exists encompassing a framework for people to adopt and adapt using recognized vocabulary when highlighting social and political injustices.

## **XI. Guam’s Divisive Abortion Debate of 1990**

Lourdes Leon Guerrero, President of the Bank of Guam, former senator, and prospective gubernatorial candidate, is one such Chamorro woman that did not dissociate herself with Western feminism, but rather swiftly unlatched and flung her bra off once she relocated to the mainland for university. Leon Guerrero left the island to attend college in the mainland in 1968. She reportedly found herself swept up in the turmoil of 1970s Los Angeles, California colored by the sexual revolution, women’s consciousness raising, women’s liberation and the protestors against the Vietnam War. Leon Guerrero recalled the numerous good women friends that she gained during that invigorating time in her life that she said most certainly influenced her thinking. However, she was aware

that she already had the basic attitude that life was unfair for women in society as she grew up in a *machismo* dominated family complaining about having to help her mother with all the house keeping and cleaning while her brothers were free to play outside at their leisure. “I would always voice that that was not fair,” said Leon Guerrero, “But because I am a woman that was my role, your role was keeping the house and keeping things in order” (Leon Guerrero, personal communication, Oct. 5, 2015). While in Los Angeles Leon Guerrero participated in women’s consciousness raising groups, protested against the Vietnam War, and never wore a bra until she moved back to Guam in the early 1980s, Leon Guerrero chuckled, “that was the kind of stuff to identify yourself as a liberated woman” (Leon Guerrero, personal communication, Oct.5, 2015). In 1990, a decade after moving back to Guam with her husband Jeff and her first-born Joaquin, Leon Guerrero then President of the Guam Nurses Association became involved in publicly opposing a bill that would ban abortion on Guam with no exceptions. “While abortion had been legal in Guam for twelve years, it was still a taboo subject. The introduction of Bill 848 made it known that abortion was legal. For some this was a shocking realization” (Dames, 2003, p.371). The anti-abortion bill, Bill 848, was introduced by Senator Elizabeth (Belle) Arriola, senior Democrat in her fourth term in Guam’s Legislature, mother of eight, and devout Catholic. The anti-abortion bill passed unanimously by a twenty-one member legislature with seven female senators and was immediately signed into law by the governor.

Guam suddenly made headlines of national media as Senator Arriola’s daughter, attorney Anita Arriola who in the legal challenge represented the plaintiff, spearheaded the local activism opposing the bill. Arriola whose background was in public interest law

was very heavily tied into the civil rights and public interest groups both in San Francisco and nationally, that is why she knew people at the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) promptly enlisting their help, in the abortion lawsuit Janet Benshoof, director of the ACLU Reproductive Freedom Project based in New York City immediately flew to stand in solidarity with Arriola. In 1990 according to Dames there were no formal civil or feminist rights organizations on island, “Given this political vacuum of organized opposition, the dominant discourse in support of the measures concerned the personhood of the “unborn” and the immorality of abortion based on religious beliefs” (Dames, 2003, p.371). In response to this vacuum in the Pacific Leon Guerrero joined together with a number of friends and like-minded Guamanian women and created the People for Choice. In order for the organization to have credibility, they did not want to be seen as an outsider coming in and telling people what to do, so they decided that they needed a Chamorro person to be the president for the People of Choice. Leon Guerrero, a dutiful Chamorro daughter, admitted grappling with her culturally informed consciousness and urge to publicly speak out as she knew she would be perceivably breaking with the traditional Chamorro principle of respect as many interpret her actions as being disrespectful her parents and elders. But said she volunteered to be president because she felt extremely passionate about making abortions legal. Leon Guerrero explained her position,

My whole thing I wasn't saying abortion wasn't bad, I wasn't saying that. I was saying abortions should be made legal, I was coming more from the perspective of women's rights and of health care for women. Because I have seen where women have gone underground to do illegal abortions and they come into the



emergency room bleeding to death and I felt that was not deserving of a woman to be denied the health care services in the event that she wants to terminate her pregnancy. I fought hard for it to be legal so it could be monitored better.

(Leon Guerrero, personal communication, Oct. 5, 2015).

The People for Choice were financially supported to facilitate local organizing by the ACLU, National Abortion Rights Action League (NARAL). Leon Guerrero said since 1990 the discussions and debates about abortion have been trying to peg people as for the rights of the unborn or for the rights of the women. She responded that she is for the rights of safe health care for women,

My position has always been that the decision of abortion is a very hard decision that women have to make, the anti-abortion and pro-life extremists they think women just wake up one morning and find themselves pregnant and say I don't want this kid I'm just going to have an abortion. That's not true at all if you talk to women who have had abortions. It has a very psychological impact on them. Its not like they take it really lightly. (Leon Guerrero, personal communication, Oct. 5, 2015).

Leon Guerrero recalled that in the 1990s she had Catholic nuns confiding in her their personal understandings of her position. The nuns were adamant about not agreeing with abortion, but they understood the necessity for accessibility as they saw first hand women who had children that were neglected and abused. Souder said in her experience the political proponents of the right to life are very often the same people who ignore the poor, who ignore the needs of children who are marginalized, who could care less about women who are being battered or women who are being abuse, who support capital

punishment. Souder identifies as a feminist and devout Catholic and a strong believer in the right to life sees this as possessing a large amount of conflict. "I believe in the right to life from the time a child is conceived and born to the time a person dies and everything in between. I also believe that a woman has a right to make decisions about her own body. Personally, I do not to ascribe to abortion. But I also believe that each and every human being have a right to decide to decide what is in the best interest of her body and her life." said Souder, "If you are pro life then you have to care about everybody's life and then you have to make decisions and support decisions that are consistent with that belief otherwise its just a way of dividing people along political lines. I have a great difficulty with folks who use the Right to Life movement as a political hatchet" (Souder, personal communication, Sept. 19, 2015). Souder said it is not an easy fine line as the law demands taking sides, she said she is on the side of justice, reconciliation, and peace. In 1990 Leon Guerrero even had older women from the island community admitting to their illegal abortions in the past. But with these brave confessions, came a great deal of harassment as well as Leon Guerrero was called a murderer and baby killer by members of the island community sympathetic the right to life. Leon Guerrero credits her personal conviction to her role as a mother.

If I don't speak up now and my daughter for some reason wants to have an abortion and she comes to me and asks me mom what have you done to protect my rights or what have you done to protect my right to choose. I don't want to look at her and say nothing. So I decided to go out there and publicly speak what I believe in and if people didn't agree with me fine, and if they agreed with me even better. But at least I can come at the end of the day as I say I did everything I

could, it didn't work the law was eliminated but at least I feel like I've done everything I could to fight even if I do loose at least I have the satisfaction that I wasn't silent. To me that's even worse to see something be defeated and you didn't fight hard to win the battle that's even harder to take. I stood my ground, I spoke publicly at rallies, my dad knew I was going to do this and all he said was be respectful, my dad had to decide to at one point whether to save my mom or save the baby there was a complication and the doctor came out and said to my dad who do you want me to save and my dad said my wife because I have three other kids that need their mother. He knew that was a difficult thing to do. He supported me. We had this big rally at the Paseo, a lot of women came, it was mostly Haoles, the Caucasians at the time, there weren't many Chamorro women there, but behind the scenes I had a lot of women's support, thanking me for being brave, because they wouldn't be that. (Leon Guerrero, personal communication, Oct. 5, 2015)

Because of the anti-abortion bill Guam was now the, "frontrunner in the race to overturn Roe vs. Wade, the 1973 U.S. Supreme Court ruling that established a woman's decision to have an abortion as a constitutionally protected right" (Dames, 2003, p. 366). Although Guam's law saw unbelievable legislative support, it was ruled unconstitutional by the lower courts, "and the decision to invalidate the law was left standing when, on appeal, the U.S. Supreme Court denied review. Because the challenge to its constitutionality failed to overturn Roe, many observers view this episode as an unequivocal victory for the pro-choice movement in the United States" (Dames, 2003, p.366). The actual ban on abortion lasted four short days in March of 1990,

Maria Doe, representing herself and all other women who needed abortions or counseling and information, and others as a class challenged P.L. 20—134 as violating the U.S. Constitution and the Guam Organic Act. They obtained a temporary restraining order and a preliminary injunction enjoining and suspending the operation, enforcement, and execution of the law until May 8 when the case was scheduled for trial. (Dames, 2003, p. 373).

Both mother and daughter Arriola identified as Roman Catholics, they just happened to belong to opposing activist camps of the divisive abortion conflict. Mother and daughter were but two examples of Roman Catholic Chamorro women, whose religion was integral to their culture and identity, producing an interesting sight to behold on island of Catholics on opposing camps of abortion. Attorney Arriola recalled that many people were shocked by her opposition to the bill, “In the Chamorro culture there is this really big cultural tradition of respect, you respect your elders, you don’t talk against them, and you certainly don’t oppose them in public, but I think for many people who knew me they were not surprised” said Arriola (Arriola, personal communication, Sept. 29, 2015). Arriola’s parents had raised her and her siblings to be independent thinkers, encouraging higher education and the freedom to formulate their own opinions about politics, social, personal, family, and other various issues, “so in that way it wasn’t very surprising that I would have my own ideas and my own thoughts and position about the abortion issue” said Arriola. The anti-abortion bill caught national attention because at the time it was the most restrictive law on abortion in the entire country, it made no exception for the life of the mother, for incest, for rape, for anything. Arriola received calls from *The New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and *People Magazine*. *Vanity Fair* flew out to Guam to

interview her and her mother. The mother daughter angle of the story most certainly peaked people's interest, but the debate was further dramatized as Governor Ada of Guam argued in court and filed a brief stating that certain constitutional rights that apply in the United States mainland do not apply to territories and in particular do not apply to Guam. Anita said this when all "hell" broke loose. Congressmen and Congresswomen that had been allies with Guam on many issues such as funding and federal and territorial relations were enraged that the governor would claim that constitutional rights do not apply in Guam. Nationally, the 1990s was the stage of big protests in front of abortion clinics organized by pro-life supporters. As a result litigation ensued regarding buffer zones in front of abortion clinics where protestors had to stay a specified number of feet away from the clinics and could not interfere with a persons access to a clinic as could they not interfere with the staffs access to the clinic. Arriola recalls the time when people were murdering doctors who were performing abortions and people were actually using religious rights to justify these murders, "Here they are coming out saying abortion is murder, but then arguing that the murder of abortion providers was justified, it was kind of like the whole world just went topsy-turvy" (Arriola, personal communication, Sept. 29, 2015). The whole issue of restricting abortion rights has moved from one ground to another, if success cannot be achieved they must find another way. Now the focus is on moving to penalize abortion providers based on informed consent, taking away their privileges at hospitals or requiring that abortion clinics be subject to the same accreditation as full blown hospitals all of, all of which Arriola said are attempted infringements on the right to an abortion. She said the end goal of restrictions on the abortion rights really are just geared at trying to drive abortion providers out of business

or completely restrict the abortion right. This makes Guam extremely at risk as accessibility to abortion on island remains limited as there are only two clinics that are providers: Women's Clinic and Guam Polyclinic. Some OBGYN's do perform abortions but they do advertise abortion as an available service.

Table 12-34 . Number of Abortions Performed by Facility, Guam: Calendar Years 2008 to 2013

Years	Total	Guam Polyclinic	Women's Clinic
2013	213	169	44
2012	275	225	50
2011	295	257	38
2010	269	219	50
2009	266	229	37
2008	327	279	48

Source: Guam Memorial Hospital Authority

Guam Statistical Yearbook 2013, 2014, p. 185

In September 2015, Senator Frank Aguon Jr. introduced Bill 168-33 the Partial-Birth Abortion and Abortion Report law addressing concerns that abortions providers have failed to fully comply with the mandatory reporting provisions of the law. This law was trying to make it a felony punishable of up to a year imprisonment and enact a penalty for noncompliance fining abortion providers who don't give all the informed consent checklist of information and fine \$10,000-\$100,000 and to make it a felony. Arriola wrote a letter in opposition demanding that the senate call it what it is, "you are trying to restrict the abortion right" said Arriola (Arriola, personal communication, Sept. 29, 2015). Attempts to restrict a women's' right to abortion is but one example of women's subordinate position in society to men. Another restriction of women's' rights is the economic wage gap. Leon Guerrero stated women need to be treated equally and fairly in all aspects of life. If no one takes a stand for women's rights the gender equality gap will never become narrower. Leon Guerrero started the Guam Women's Chamber of

Commerce because she was frustrated with the Guam Chamber of Commerce for not recognizing the growing success of Guam women in business and in education so she resigned. “Women are only getting paid seventy-seven cents out of the dollar,” said Leon Guerrero (Leon Guerrero, personal communication, Oct.5, 2015). On Guam women voters have a strong voice at fifty-nine percent. Leon Guerrero said there are more women now graduating from the University of Guam and more women businesses opening. When the issue of raising Guam’s minimum wage was on the table a few years ago the Guam Women’s Chamber of Commerce decided to take the position to support raising the minimum wage. Arriola said the Guam Women’s Chamber of Commerce was alone in their support of raising the wage, she was in disbelief that the Bureau of Women’s Affairs was completely silent.

That very clearly affects women and their rights here on Guam and their ability to earn a decent living yet the Bureau was completely silent on it, they didn’t send a representative, they didn’t send any testimony in favor of it, it just begs the question what is your mission. I have never seen the Bureau of Women’s Affairs and take a position on any policy issues that affect women’s rights here in Guam. I have seen them go in front of the legislature and argue in favor of increasing their budget but I have never seen them testify in favor of an issue that would effect women’s livelihood, their employment, their status, I just don’t recall.

(Arriola, personal communication, Sept. 29, 2015).

Leon Guerrero is seriously contemplating running for governor in the upcoming gubernatorial election. She said if she is elected she will position the Bureau of Women’s Affairs right under the Office of the Governor as she wants to ensure that Guam has good

facts about its economy.

## **XII. Reluctant Guamanian Women Leaders in the Public Sphere**

In the early 1990s Chamorro and Guamanian women alike were visible in leadership roles in the island's public sphere. Seven of the twenty-one members of Guam's legislature were women. Women were administrators, directors, business persons, police chiefs, public prosecutors, judges, attorney general, senators, university president, and president of the Guam Chamber of Commerce. Souder wrote that, "often these accomplishments are viewed as by-products of modernizations, which is considered a 'liberalizing force' for women" (Souder, 1991, p.444). There is much juxtaposition in present day Chamorro culture when contrasted with the ancient ways of life on the island, especially concerning the lives of Guamanian women. In an interview Speaker Judith T. Won Pat of Guam's 33rd Legislature eloquently explained this unique phenomenon,

With the dominance of capitalist patriarchy vis-à-vis a U.S. political system, there is no doubt that it has taken its toll on traditional systems on Guam that were historically structured matrilineally. However there is an essence on Guam that inherently regards a feminist framework, albeit facing a decline and struggles for power in various male-dominated arenas. Notably, women leaders, organizations, and programs seek to empower women's political ideology, and implement gender mainstreaming. (Won Pat, personal communication, Sept. 2015).

More than twenty years after 1990 women hold many prominent leadership positions in the island's public sphere. Four of fifteen member of the current 33<sup>rd</sup> Guam Legislature are women and the highest position, Speaker is held by the Honorable Judith T. Won Pat. The United States Attorney for the Districts of Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands is



presently the Honorable Alicia Anne Garrido Limtiaco and the Attorney General of Guam is the Honorable Elizabeth Barrett-Anderson. The Honorable Congresswoman Madeleine Z. Bordallo has occupied Guam's sole seat in the United States House of Representatives since being elected in 2003. The positioning of these women in leadership roles indicates progress for gender equality, why then do women's issues remain on the backburner and incidences of gender discrimination remain substantial in the island community? The problem lies partially on the backs of lawmakers who fail to take tangible action on behalf of their constituency. Souder said the female reality on Guam is layered, "they are Chamorro, we have access to power, we have been able to bridge the gap between political power, we are well represented in professional and private sector, these are indicators that women have come a long way," however Souder admitted, "The rest of Chamorro women may not be reflected, that's not who the bulk of Guam women are, women from Micronesia experience tremendous sexual harassment so much family violence, sexual violence is rampant and expected" (Souder, personal communication, Sept. 3, 2015). Arriola said the curtain needs to be lifted on the actuality of the positioning of Guamanian women, "I think people believe there is actually equality here, as a consequence of this we are merely paying lip service to women and women's issues" (Arriola, personal communication, Sept. 2, 2015). The illusion of equality is compounded with the lack of a singular issue for supporters of Guamanian women's rights to champion, as often women's issues are divisive in nature. Arriola said women have so many issues, and often those issues divide women amongst themselves, as a result the women's movement lacks a singular focus, contributing to a lack of formal organizing and advocacy surrounding female issues. Arriola cited the recent success of

the LGBTQ community that she said in comparison was considerably more organized and had success as they solely focused on championing same sex marriage legislation. This singular focus was the key to their success according to Arriola. Leon Guerrero was critical of current Congresswoman Bordallo, “I truly respect the Congresswoman but I don’t think she is politically minded for women’s rights,” said Leon Guerrero “It has to be brought up. Her generation of people grew up in the same generation as my mother, her whole thing was the fashion and the beauty of women, believe me we shouldn’t ignore that but in my mind its not the importance of women. I don’t think she is in that frame of mind of the younger generation” (Leon Guerrero, personal communication, Sept. 3, 2015). Congresswoman Bordallo, like many of her Guamanian sisters, has had a history of steering clear of polarizing issues, Leon Guerrero has observed,

Once issues start becoming more controversial, women kind of back off from that, I’m hoping that the younger generation doesn’t do that and I’m hoping that they are stronger and more confident in themselves. If its not a safe issue they won’t, to me that’s how they are, but in the background they are supportive, but they are not confident enough to be out there and be speaking about. I don’t expect every woman to do that, but I think we do need more women to do that.

(Leon Guerrero, personal communication, Oct. 5, 2015).

Souder stated that the experiences of these women in high positions of power have caused the community to shed a blind eye to the persistence of gender discrimination as they publicly describe their experiences as positive. Souder asked, “The women who are in those layers that are invisible, how do we begin to give voice to that?” ((Souder, personal communication, Sept. 3, 2015). Where women political leaders have fallen

short, Guamanian women in NGOs have proven to be the movers and shakers on the ground in local civil societies providing direct services to those most in need.

### **XIII. Guamanian Women Working in NGOs**

The Guam Coalition Against Sexual Assault and Family Violence (GCASAFV) is a member organization made up of Guam's community-based providers, government allies, and individuals who address issues related to sexual assault and family violence on Guam. Many of the listed organizational members: Archdiocese of Agana, Office of Family Ministry, Association of Individual, Marriage and Family Therapists, Ayuda Foundation / Island Girl Power, Bethel Church Association, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Guam, Catholic Social Service / Alee Shelter, Healing Hearts Crisis Center - Guam Behavioral Health and Wellness Center, Erica's House, Guam Legal Services Corporation-Disability Law Center, Guam Sexual Assault and Abuse Resource Center Association, Guma' Mami, Inc., Immaculate Heart of Mary Catholic Church, Inafa' Maolek Conciliation, Oasis Empowerment Center, The Salvation Army, Sanctuary Incorporated, Victim Advocates Reaching Out, and WestCare Pacific Islands specifically address women's issues with female-dominated staff members (GCASAFV Members & Partners, n.d.). A few of these organizations, such as Victim Advocates Reaching Out, deal with issues of gender-violence that are so sensitive they can only have female staff, as they deal specifically with majority female victims of violence. On that particular note, these female survivors have asserted they are only comfortable working with other women. Dr. Bez said that although there is currently little in the form of activism surrounding Guam's most pressing women's issues there are still plenty of people flying under the radar doing wonderful things, Bez affirmed, "there are a lot of women pushing

women forward” (Bez, personal communication, Dec. 14, 2015).

#### **XIV. Conclusion**

In the early 1990s Guamanian women were rallying around a singular women’s rights issue and have since lost their steam. There is no question that today women around the world, especially in the developed nations of the world, are better positioned than centuries prior, Sheryl Sandberg, chief operating officer at Facebook cautions, “But knowing things could be worse should not stop us from trying to make them better” (Sandberg, 2013, p.5). A century ago the suffragettes took to the streets and marched for the freedoms women now take for granted every day. They envisioned a more equal world. One hundred years have passed and we have failed those brave women, as human rights violations in the form of gender discrimination remain substantially persistent. The gap between the sexes is widening, even more so for women of color, including the women of the Western Pacific that call Guam home. Sandberg proclaimed that it is time for us to face the fact that over the past two decades the women’s revolution has stalled, “the promise of equality is not the same as true equality” (Sandberg, 2013, p.7). The Guamanian women’s rights movement echoes this standstill island’s female community, despite the fact that there are local women in high-ranking leadership positions, is suffering because of limited access to sexual education and reproductive health, frequent incidences of sexual assault, rape, and family violence, and unequal wages in comparison to their male counterparts. But an end to gender discrimination will not be achieved with the support of just half of the world. In addition to women lifting up women, men must also be encouraged to lift up women both in the home sphere and in the work sphere. Without collective effort of the sexes the stalling of the women’s revolution may come to

a complete halt.

Guam is not alone in the stalling of its activism surrounding women's rights. But where have all the activism pushing women's rights forward on the island of Guam vanished to and why are Guamanian women not crying out in protest demanding equal rights? Why is there no human rights discourse when it comes to women's rights issues? Why is there a perceived notion of gender equality on the island when the statistics of sexual assault, domestic violence, and teen pregnancy are reported to be twice the national average of the mainland United States? Why are Guamanian women still associated with what is considered "soft issues" rather than what is considered "hard issues?" Why do Guamanian women find it difficult to publicly advocate controversial issues? Why do Guamanian women find it call themselves feminists? A backslide began in the 1990s. In the words of Laura Souder, "Prosperity has a way of dulling consciousness" (Souder, personal communication, Sept. 19, 2015). The 1990s on Guam was a very prosperous period for people and Guamanians became engaged in building their personal prosperity and their businesses flourished. Simultaneously women were becoming more and more engaged visibly in positions of leadership indicating gender equality advancements lessening a need to actively advocate for women's rights.

Advocates for women's rights issues have since been replaced with a plethora social organizations for women that focus their work on fundraising for philanthropic issues and hosting elaborate social galas dominating and defining Guam's female landscape. These groups carry out charitable work, hosting social events disguised as philanthropic fundraisers, but they refrain from getting their hands dirty by lobbying or sending representatives to speak on their behalf on any issues relating to policy that could

be seen as political or controversial affecting Guamanian women's livelihood. These social clubs for women lack a soul. Many of them are just an extension of a stateside organization that has been brought to Guam and glorified as something better than what is available on island. Souder sees this as problematic, "Here on Guam it is very easy to copy arguments from somewhere else. What works for Chamorros will not work for Chuukese and so forth" (Souder, personal communication, Sept. 3, 2015). Souder said she does not join organizations, she joins movements and, "We need another renaissance, which is a movement of consciousness I think we have fallen short in our legacy, I think we still have an opportunity to be heard, we are not alone" (Souder, personal communication, Sept. 3, 2015). Key Guamanian women's rights actors, including Souder, who were active in the early 1990s on women's issues such as reproductive rights, gender inequalities, wage inequalities, sexual assault, and domestic violence believe that it is the responsibility of the younger generations that are in their 20s, 30s, 40s, and 50s to come together amongst themselves and with her generation to organize, publicly rally, and speak out in support of women's rights on the unincorporated territory of Guam. Souder expressed her frustration with the silence, "I feel the hunger, but we don't have enough nourishment to feed people. Young women need to start speaking out, your voices count now, there has come a time that we need to collaborate" (Souder, personal communication, Sept. 3, 2015). Guam's women's movement should be a movement that organically grows out of the island and the concerns of its island's residents. The movement should represent all of Guam's intersections: socio-economic classes, multi-ethnic groups, nationalities, sexualities, genders, abilities, religions, education levels. A movement that emerges from the particularity of Guam will be a

formidable force. Advocates of Guamanian women's rights must protect what matters most to them, promoting their interests in an earnest, but fearless way. In this thesis the journey of Guamanian women's multi-layered identity is chronologically mapped charting itself all the way from ancient times, through Spanish colonization, through Americanization, through Japanese occupation, and back to another present day period of the second Americanization. Through the lens of various active Guamanian feminists during the lead up to the Fourth World Conference in Beijing 1995 to present day, the year of 2015, it can be seen that Guamanian women's movement has lost its way and energy despite the fact that human rights violations in the form of gender discrimination remain substantial.

## References

- Aoki, D. (2014, February 16). Teen Pregnancy Brings Big Risks. *Pacific Daily News*.
- Cook, R. J. (1994). Human rights of women: National and international perspectives. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Crenshaw, K.. (1991). Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color. *Stanford Law Review*, 43(6), 1241–1299.  
<http://doi.org/10.2307/1229039>
- Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing 1995. (n.d.). Retrieved January 11, 2016, from <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/index.html>
- Guam Listing as a Non-Self-Governing Territory. (n.d.). Retrieved January 11, 2016, from [http://www.un.org/en/decolonization/pdf/Guam 2015 Profile\\_15 Dec 2015.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/decolonization/pdf/Guam%202015%20Profile_15%20Dec%202015.pdf)
- Guam Population 2013. (2013, October 14). Retrieved January 11, 2016, from <http://www.worldpopulationstatistics.com/guam-population-2013/>
- Guam Statistical Yearbook 2013. Retrieved January 11, 2016, from <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B4H7gmeMoSpYQndncmZnanNLRkE/view>
- “Guam Territorial status Administering Power UN Related...” United Nations. Date accessed: 9 November 2014.  
[http://www.un.org/en/decolonization/pdf/Guam%202015%20Profile\\_15%20Dec %202015.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/decolonization/pdf/Guam%202015%20Profile_15%20Dec%202015.pdf)
- Hune, S., & Nomura, G. M. (2003). Asian/Pacific Islander American women: A historical anthology. New York: New York University Press.



- Manalo, R. G. (n.d.). Statement presented at Commission on the Status of Women Forty-ninth session. Retrieved January 11, 2016, from <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/Review/documents/statements/Manalo.Opening%20statement.pdf>
- Miculka, C. (2015, February 2). Guam Rape Rate 2nd Highest in US. *Pacific Daily News*. Retrieved January 11, 2016, from <http://pidp.eastwestcenter.org/pireport/2015/February/02-02-06.htm>
- Neier, A. (2012). *The international human rights movement: A history*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Our Partners. (n.d.). Retrieved January 11, 2016, from <http://www.spc.int/en/partners.html>
- Review and Appraisal of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Outcome document of the Twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, March 2005. (n.d.). Retrieved January 11, 2016, from <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/Review/english/49sess.htm>
- Souder, L. (1991). Feminism and Women's Studies on Guam. *NWSA Journal*, 3(3), 442–446. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4316157>
- Souder, L. (1992). *Daughters of the Island: Contemporary Chamorro Women Organizers on Guam*. (Series no. 1.). Mangilao, GU: Micronesian Area Research Center, University of Guam.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights | United Nations. (1948, December 10).

Retrieved January 11, 2016, from <http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>

Together We Can End The Violence. (n.d.). Retrieved January 11, 2016, from

[http://guamcoalition.org/member\\_partners.html](http://guamcoalition.org/member_partners.html)

Tompkins, J. (November 1977). Women of Guam (Rep.) (C. Bamba & L. Souder, Eds.).

GU: Guam Women's Conference.

Underwood, R. A. (2014, July 06). Guampedia. Retrieved January 11, 2016, from

<http://www.guampedia.com/guams-political-status/>

UN, United Nations, Non-Self-Governing territories, decolonization, independence, self-determination. (n.d.). Retrieved January 11, 2016, from

<http://www.un.org/en/events/nonselfgoverning/nonselfgoverning.shtml>

“Guam's Facts & Figures at a Glance 2013” Brochure. Bureau of Statistics and Plans  
Office of the Governor 2014.

United Nations Treaty Collections Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of  
Discrimination against Women. (n.d.). Retrieved January 11, 2016, from

<https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY>

WHAT IS ERIN'S LAW? (2013). Retrieved January 11, 2016, from

<http://erinslaw.org/about/what-is-erins-law/>

33rd Guam Legislature - Senators. (n.d.). Retrieved January 11, 2016, from

[http://www.guamlegislature.com/senators\\_33rd.htm](http://www.guamlegislature.com/senators_33rd.htm)